



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the High Commissioner for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Paddy Ashdown

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 15, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States very warmly welcomes High Representative Ashdown back to the Permanent Council, and thanks him for coming to Vienna to make a last address in his current capacity.

The High Representative has credited many people and organizations for Bosnia and Herzegovina's solid transformation from a war-torn state to a country firmly on the path to Euro-Atlantic integration. But let us also thank Lord Ashdown, whose contribution to this change has been incalculable.

The High Representative has served the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina with wisdom and skill, intervening only when absolutely necessary, nurturing reconciliation and building trust, and tirelessly pushing through critical reforms. Over the past three and a half years, he has guided the country to the point where now, as he notes, it is time for the citizens and leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take on the necessary reforms needed for full Euro-Atlantic integration. For his superb leadership, wisdom and vision, we applaud the High Representative.

Lord Ashdown's appearance here today underscores just how important a role the OSCE plays in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the High Representative has noted, with the progressive drawdown of his office, the presence of the OSCE Mission will become even more important.

As the High Representative has also noted, the OSCE Mission played a significant role in the recent passage of milestone defense reform legislation, which created a unified and professional army under civilian control. These past months have also seen an agreement to enact police reform, which met Bosnia and Herzegovina's final condition for opening Stabilization and Association talks with the European Union. These positive developments have put Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the words of the High Representative, at a watershed, approaching the threshold of Euro-Atlantic integration.

However, we would like to reiterate what we also said last month, and that is that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot put the war completely behind them until Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic face justice in The Hague. The full integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and of Serbia and Montenegro, into the Euro-Atlantic community cannot be achieved until they meet their obligations to cooperate fully with the ICTY.

Of course, the reform process is far from over. The United States remains concerned over the actions of some municipal authorities to restructure schools in a way that divides students by

ethnicity. We once again call on both municipal and central government authorities to end this practice. We strongly support the continued engagement of the OSCE Mission in the area of educational reform, where Head of Mission Davidson and his staff are working to help develop curricula that promote inter-ethnic understanding and to ensure access to education without discrimination.

The tenth anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords has been cause for much celebration, and the success of key reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the past year has been a cause for optimism. We again commend the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina for having the courage to make the tough but necessary decisions that have yielded so much progress.

We concur entirely with Lord Ashdown's reference to the need for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to complete its stabilization. This is always the most important thing in the ultimate development of any society - it comes from the people.

And, Mr. Chairman, we again thank the High Representative, Lord Ashdown, for his commitment to peace, democracy and prosperity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for addressing us here today. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.